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THE HOUSE

AN ORIENTAL APARTMENT.

THE writer had occasion to visit not long ago an old acquaintance, a woman of business, whom he knew to be a person of original ideas and methods. He was not, therefore, surprised when, after leaving the studio, he was conducted to another room on a lower floor, fitted up with what may be termed a modest luxury. There was no distinct effort at oddity of decoration or furnishing. For the lady in question to make such an effort would be unnecessary. But the room, with its two tall windows overlooking a city park, its plentiful use of rugs and cushions and drapery and entire absence of pictorial decoration, had a certain charm not often attained even by artists in fitting up their "dens." At the rear, another room, opening into this by large folding doors, had been converted into a divan—properly so-called—the term meaning the whole of the upper part of a room about which the cushions that serve in the East for seats by day and beds by night are arranged. The folding doors were always open; but two handsome rugs were hung up in lieu of portières. Within, not only the couch (the framework of which appeared to have seen service as a studio platform), but the whole of the floor was covered with large white bearskins. The walls to the height of a dado were covered by rugs disposed lengthwise. An old bronze lamp, with panes of ruby-colored glass, hung from the ceiling. A pair of morocco slippers, lying far apart, a tray and water pitcher, both of chiselled brass, and a confused multitude of cushions and pillows of all sizes, shapes and materials testified that when the divan was used at all, it was used for all it was worth. "You see," said the owner, "that between work and business worry even a person of my iron constitution sometimes gets tired. I run down here with a lot of bills, or drawings, or measurements; leave them in the front room; lock the door; then dive into my divan and draw the curtains. The quiet, the coolness, the absence of much light—for light irritates the nerves, as you know—enable me in a little while to go out and attack my work, usually with good results. These lazy half hours I reckon among the most valuable of the day; and I believe that to enjoy thoroughly such a retreat as this, one must be very busy most of the time."

It is certain that many of our readers will not agree with this last proposition, and will require no better excuse than is furnished by our semi-tropical summers to enjoy a boudoir or a smoking-room furnished in Oriental style, though they will, doubtless, be pleased to know that the most energetic people can find reason for indulging in the same tastes. They will, we feel sure, be inclined to go much farther in their Orientalism, and we propose to make the matter easy for them, so far as illustrations and description can do so. As we have already given several projects of decoration for an Oriental room, we

will now confine ourselves to actualities, recommending only such departures from Eastern usage as are difficult of avoidance because of our customs and conditions.

We will suppose that the apartment will consist of a vestibule, a small reception room, or antechamber, and a principal room, which may be salon, boudoir or lounging room.

In our design for a vestibule, the artist has desired to introduce many modes of ornamentation, from among which a choice may be made. He has, in fact, put the material for several designs into one, and the result, if literally carried out, would be somewhat theatrical and

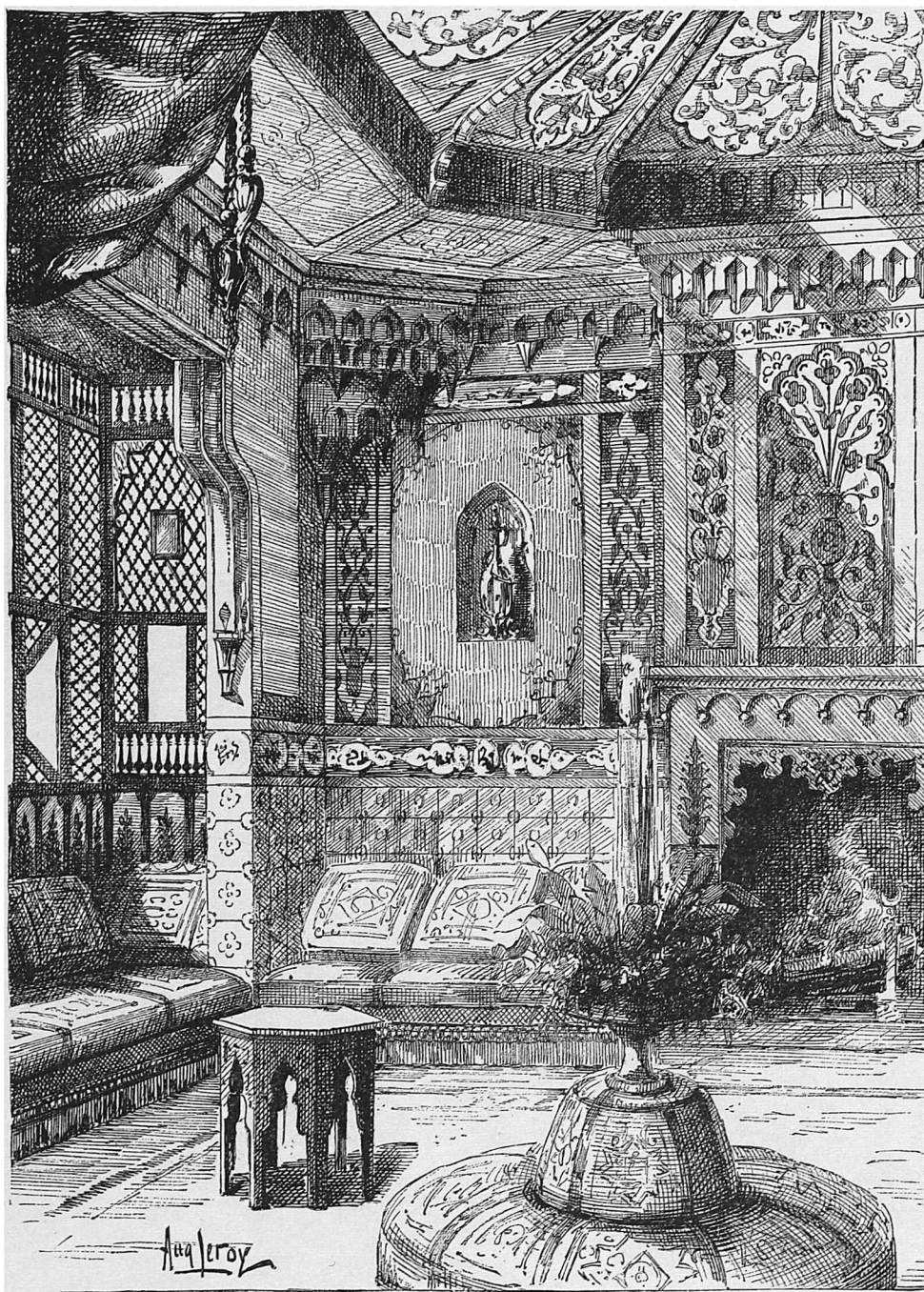
tint of the walls should be carried up to the cornice, from which only a few arabesques in light colors should descend as pendentives. In the East the commonest scheme of color for this part of the house is the same as for the exterior—namely, red ochre and whitewash, to which is added a dark green for the panels of the wood-work. With us, a creamy white or gray may take the place of the lime wash, and we may allow ourselves to introduce colored materials and gilding in a moderate degree.

Our lounging room is much more faithful to Eastern models. The mousharabeyah, with its trellis of unpainted wood, projects from the wall about a foot and a half or two feet. It is usual to place in it, on a shelf above the cushioned sofa, several porous clay vessels filled with water, which is thus kept fresh—at the same time it cools the entering breeze. In the East fireplaces are unknown in the living rooms, braziers being used instead, if warmth is required. Mr. Leroy's arrangement has been dictated by his own fancy; but, though harmonizing sufficiently, it might be better to follow the form common in Eastern kitchens. In these, the chimney breast, projecting as in our drawing, is cut not square across, but into an irregular horseshoe arch, much like that of the central panel directly over the fireplace in our design. It is usual in the East, where the ceilings are higher than with us, to have over the mousharabeyah a small window filled with a fantastic design of flowers or arabesques in colored glass inlaid in carved plaster. We give a panel design which might be easily arranged for the purpose. The conventionalized fruits and flowers only should be in richly colored glass, the rest being in plaster from which the larger forms are carved in relief. Either these last or the background may be gilt. Other designs for these small ornamental windows are a vase with flowers, a conventionalized lion or other animal—the natural forms are never used by the good Moslem—or a word or phrase from the Koran in Arabic letters.

In Eastern reception rooms the pavement is usually in octagonal tiles of black and white marble, the interstices between which are filled with smaller glazed or unglazed tiles of earthenware, making a very rich mosaic. The walls are covered to a certain height with a mosaic of similar material but of flowing design, of which we give two specimens. In India, this mar-

quetry in stone is still made with white marble for a ground and rich arabesques of flowers and foliage in colored agates, onyx and lapis-lazuli. Specimens of this work are sometimes imported, but are expensive. The upper part of the walls is usually white, and the painted borders are more confined to the niches for vessels or pipes than to the panels, as in our drawing. A variety of suitable motives will be found in our illustration from the Alhambra.

The ceilings are in wood, the beams, as a rule, carved and painted, or sometimes gilt. The panels between may be painted in arabesque, as in our drawing. The doors are in very many small panels disposed in a va-



LOUNGING OR SMOKING ROOM IN ORIENTAL STYLE. BY AUGUST LEROY.

garish. But accepting the main architectural features, we may suppress the unoriental bevelled glass squares above the horse-shoe arches and fill the unused arch entirely with a gilt grille, as in the lower part, or with glass rings, as in the upper. The space above the horse-shoes, instead of being occupied by a pointed arch in relief, may be treated, as the entrance door is, with painted ornamentation merely, which will give a decidedly more Oriental air to the place. The deep frieze, which the artist has thought necessary to carry along the rich ornamentation of his overarches, is a piece of Occidentalism wholly out of keeping with Eastern ideas of contrast and harmony. It should be abolished, and the plain

riety of geometric designs. This reception hall is frequently sprinkled in summer, which tends to keep the air in the neighboring apartments cool and fresh.

There is commonly no marked division between the outer reception hall which we have just described and the divan, except that the latter is raised six or eight inches. The floor here is carpeted or covered with mats. A sort of sofa is constructed against the walls with palm branches and covered with mattresses stuffed with cotton.

It is strange that apparently so simple an arrangement as the divan should be so difficult of execution by the ordinary upholsterer as it doubtless is. He will, as a rule, assure you that one of his rug-covered lounges answers the whole purpose, only needing some extra cushions. Do not be beguiled by him. In the first place, a greater width is needed than is to be found in any ordinary sofa, and, secondly, the cushions which usually go with the sofa are too uncompromising in arrangement. The best cushions for a divan that the writer has seen are made especially for the purpose by Joseph P. McHugh & Co., in West Forty-second Street. They consist of short bolsters, which may be arranged lengthwise or set on end, according to circumstances. Mr. McHugh has good, practical ideas in regard to the divan, and may be consulted on the subject with advantage.

In the principal chamber of the harem, as seen in the East, the ceiling is vaulted or in cupola-shape. A lantern in open work often hangs from it, and either a fountain or an ottoman occupies the centre of the floor. The rich plaster cornice in honeycomb work is either gilded or left white. There are commonly, the walls being higher than in our own rooms, hanging shelves of gilt and painted wood, which support vessels of Chinese or Persian ware. They are for ornament merely, and are placed about seven or eight feet from the floor.

A contrivance often used to secure a draught of air through the house, and which might be copied here to advantage, is similar to the so-called "wind sails" used

to ventilate the holds of vessels engaged in the Mediterranean fruit trade. It is simply a huge funnel of canvas stretched over a graduated series of barrel hoops. The smaller end enters a scuttle or opening of any sort in the roof. The larger end is turned in the direction of the wind, and catches enough of the faintest breeze to

stronger contrasts than we, as a rule, care for, and will join the roughest and barest of surfaces to the most luxuriously decorated. The intentional rudeness of much of their hand-work is, no doubt, intended to harmonize these somewhat violent contrasts. Thus the rough stencilling or painting in egg medium on the panels

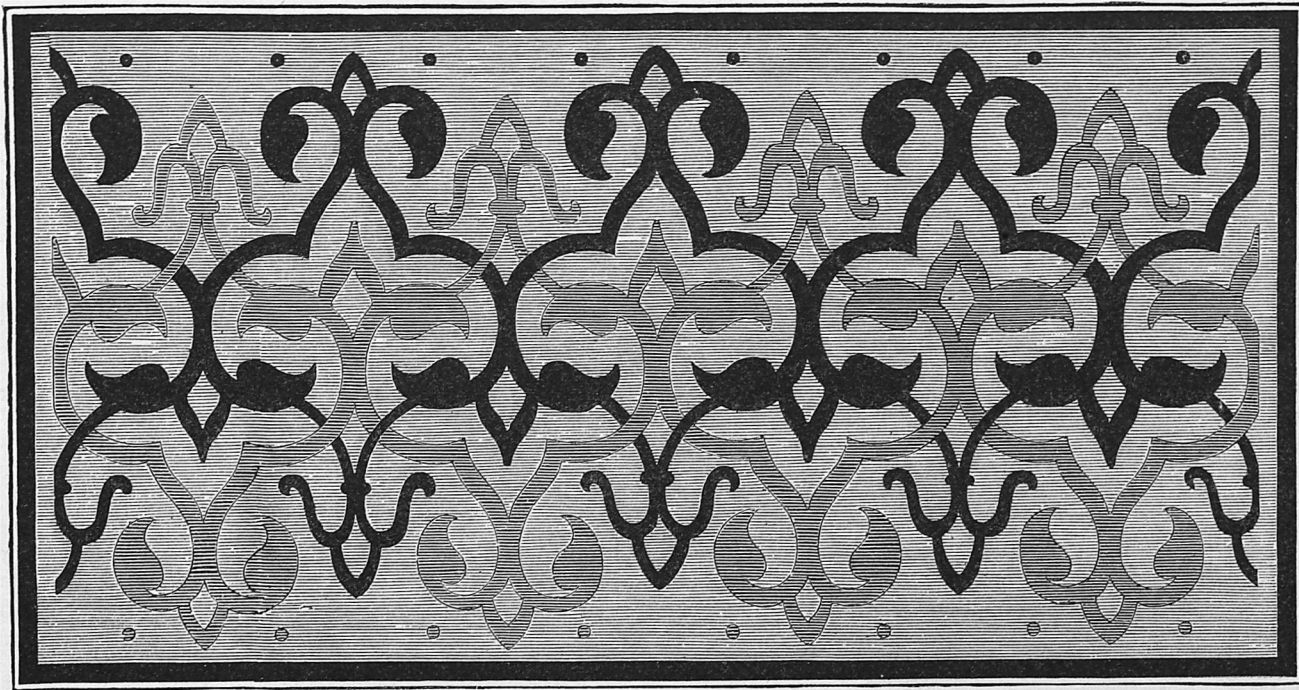
more removed from the eye leads up to finer paintings, having all the quality of miniatures which decorate the backgrounds and the borders of the numerous recesses. These latter paintings are often done in gouache on paper, and are glued to the wood-work, the whole being covered with a thick orange-colored varnish, which harmonizes and renders transparent the crude tints and gives an unique richness to the gilding which is commonly added. Old Persian

book covers of papier-maché covered with similar decoration can often be had here for a few dollars each, and would form excellent backgrounds for niches and cupboards.

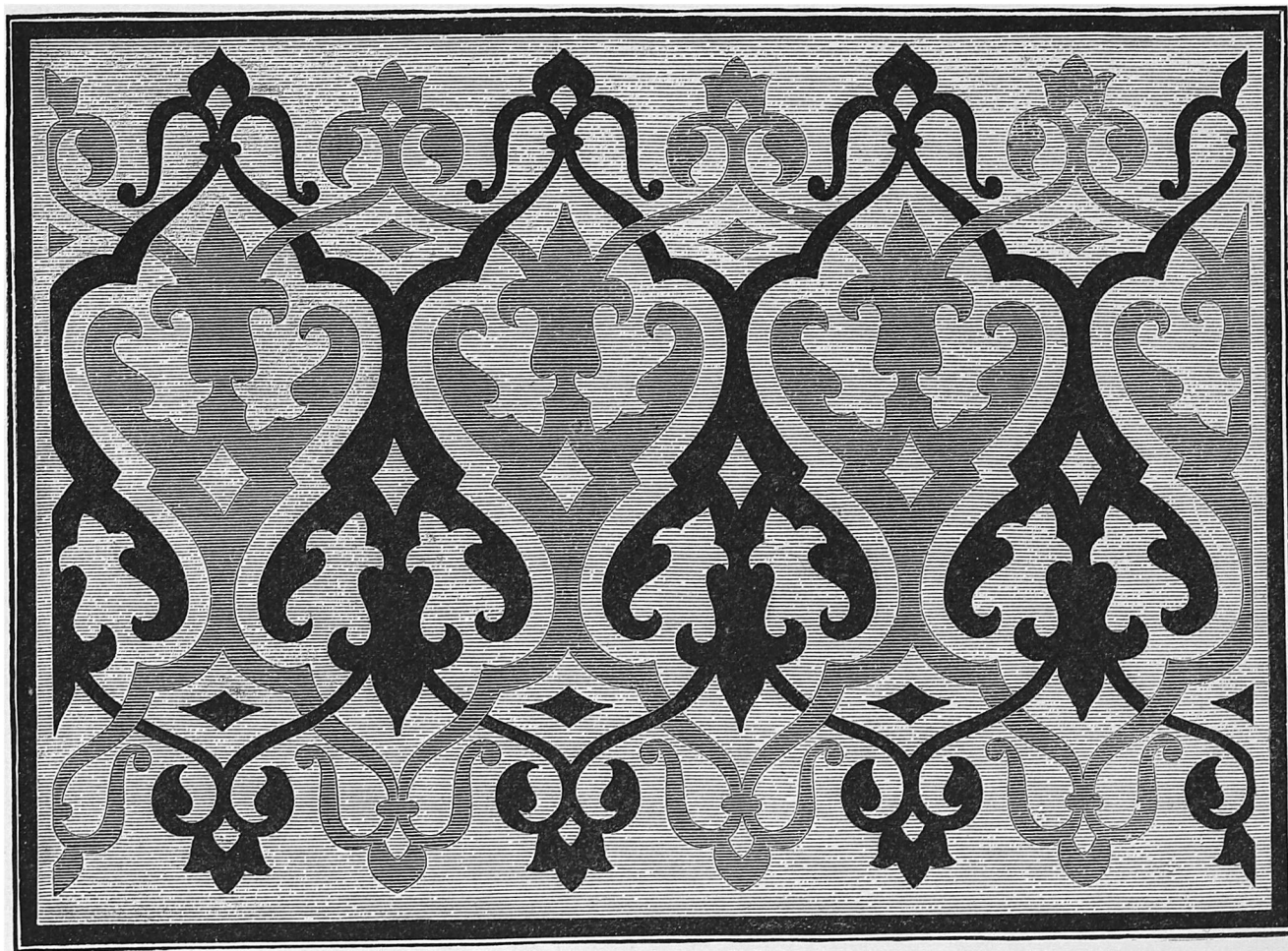
Plaster is another material which is used in a variety of ways quite different from our treatment of it. We have spoken of the windows filled with wrought plaster slabs, in the few openings of which small panes or lumps of stained glass are inserted. Most of the famous honeycomb work of the Alhambra and other Moorish palaces, a notion of which may be gained from the cornices in our first illustration, is wrought out of marble, not moulded in it. The raised arabesques, like those in the next illustration, are likewise cut out of the solid. Plaster may be worked with knife and chisel with great freedom, and may be delicately finished with the finer sculptor's tools. It is unnecessary to dwell on the advantages of such free-hand work "in situ." One

of the most obvious is the opportunity for the intelligent filling of odd corners where moulded decorations will not fit, and which are with us almost always botched in consequence.

This plaster work is generally enlivened with distemper colors and gilding; and the same are freely employed



ARABIC MARBLE-INLAY DESIGN FOR WALL DECORATION, IN BLACK, RED AND YELLOW.



ARABIC MARBLE-INLAY DESIGN FOR WALL DECORATION, IN BLACK, RED AND YELLOW.

use of whitewash in their most gaily decorated rooms. In the semi-obscurity caused by their very restricted lighting arrangements, its tone is a rather deep neutral gray, and as it covers only the upper surfaces of the high walls, it offers an agreeable relief to the colors and gilding lavished elsewhere. The Oriental eye delights in

on carved wood and on marble. The latter is also often stained or washed with water-colors. Inlays of the cheaper metals, such as brass and tin, in dark wood-work are common, and they are chased almost as preciously as if they were gold and silver. Bone is also quite commonly employed instead of ivory; and small cheap mirrors, or broken bits of mirrors, are set into plaster, inlaid into wood and worked into the embroideries of portières and curtains. There is no attempt to disguise these cheap materials, which the hand-work bestowed upon them renders dignified; but in the gloom of an Eastern interior their subdued sparkle excites the imagination, while it is decidedly less fatiguing to the eye than an equally lavish use of more precious material would be. We, with our natural inclination in favor of bright colors and distinct forms, can rarely get into complete sympathy with the Eastern style of decoration. The aim of that is to secure extreme richness of effect in parts contrasted with absolute bareness in other parts and deftly harmonized by an infinite variety of workmanship, of broken tints and all degrees and kinds of reflecting and non-reflecting surfaces. The Eastern designer has at his command a whole palette, so to speak, of glittering materials, where we are confined to gold, silver and aluminium. His arabesque paintings are so arranged that at a little distance and in the shade they give, like the patterns of an India shawl, the effect of harmonious, broken tones. In this way he obtains broad effects with the minutest and most delicate treatment—a thing which the European or American can never be depended upon to secure. Our parting recommendation must therefore be to use as much as possible materials of Eastern manufacture. Stuffs of all sorts, from cheap cotton prints and light gauzes to the heaviest rugs, are always procurable; and with a little research among the bric-à-brac stores, tiles, carved and inlaid wood-work and illuminat-

ed panels may be found sufficient to give a small apartment a truly Oriental appearance.

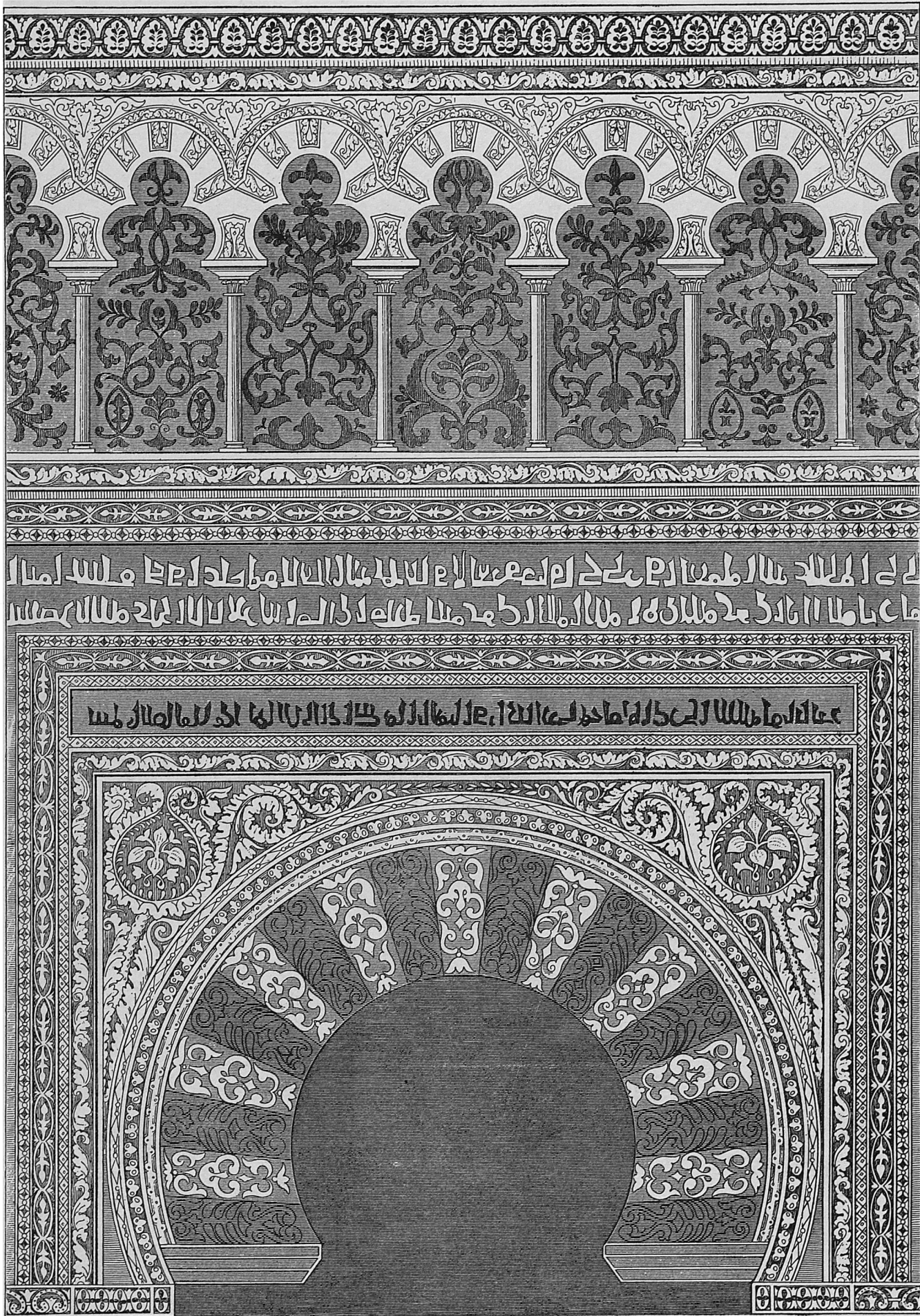
"ILLUSTRATIONS in Color of the Interior Decoration of a City House" is the title of a handsomely printed publication, which, while primarily a trade circular issued by Messrs. M. H. Birge & Sons, of Buffalo, to advertise certain decorative novelties of which they make a

TALKS WITH DECORATORS.

VII.—FREDERIC CROWNINSHIELD ON THE REVIVAL OF MURAL PAINTING.

"WHY have I faith in the revival of mural painting?" said Mr. Crowninshield. "Because we have to build for many years. All great building epochs have neces-

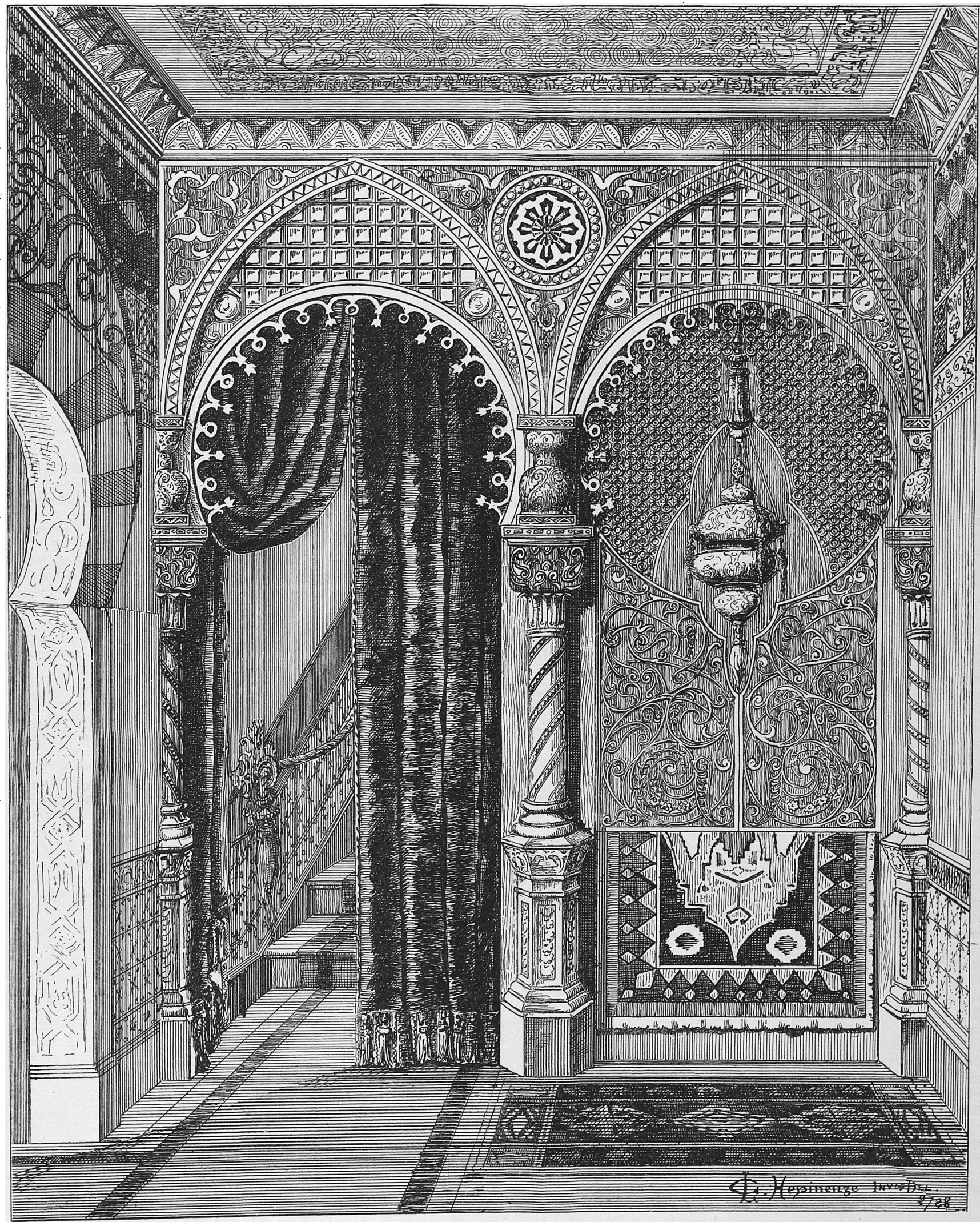
sitated mural decoration. Large wall spaces suggest and invite pictorial treatment. They may be relieved by flowing arabesques or covered with stencil designs, but the result will be barren. It is the human figure that interests us, that appeals to the intellect. Indeed, all great easel painting is coincident with mural painting and has sprung out of it. The mural painting of the Egyptians belongs to its great building epoch. The only painting of the Greeks of which we know anything is that on the walls of their houses and their temples. After Xerxes destroyed Athens the Greeks had to build, and, in that great architectural revival of the days of Pericles, sculpture reached those heights which have never been surpassed. As but little of their mural painting has survived, our estimates of its excellence must be purely conjectural; but we do know that the walls of their admirable buildings were covered with great historical compositions, and in all probability they were worthy of the nation the remains even of whose stupendous works of architecture and sculpture delight and in-



HISPANO-MOESQUE ARCH AND FRIEZE FROM THE ALHAMBRA.

specialty, is really full of good suggestions for general interior decoration and furnishing. The color printing is less ambitious than some previous efforts by the same house, and is more artistic, being confined to flat washes over well-executed pen-and-ink sketches, after the fashion of the tinted perspective drawings furnished by some professional decorators. Of the six colored plates, that of the "Morning Room" is perhaps the most attractive.

struct the civilized world of to-day. In the Gothic revival the same thing occurred, although not to the same degree. In the early days of the Italian republics the painters followed close on the heels of the plasterers, and produced such frescoes as have remained unrivalled. During the Renaissance, Popes Julius II. and Leo X. were great builders, and we have the productions of Raphael and Michael Angelo. It is such occasions



TURKISH TREATMENT FOR A VESTIBULE OF AN AMERICAN HOUSE. BY G. L. HEPINEUZE.

that bring forth great works. There was nothing forced or artificial about art in those times. Art was serious, not a pastime, and is to be distinguished from the modern classic revival at Munich and the modern Gothic revival at Westminster. Both of these are artificial and the results as you find them.

"If our country had stopped growing we couldn't make the opportunity. But it hasn't. We are in the middle of a great architectural revival. There are Government buildings to be erected, buildings for great corporations, buildings for various private enterprises—the demands of wealth are crowding upon us, and will for years. Somebody tells me that from six to eight churches are built every day. If the decoration of these were open to artists, it would be a great thing."

"Are the painters prepared?"

"No! Mural painting needs special preparation. But the necessity would beget the men, and something worthy of the name of art would come out of it."

"What would be its processes?"

"I doubt whether the buon fresco of the Italians will ever be revived. That, you know, is the only real fresco-color mixed with water and applied to the wet plaster. It is very beautiful and very difficult. I know because I had some practical experience at it in Sienna. But the conditions in this country are all against a revival of true fresco, which primarily calls for good lime and good plaster. We have bad lime and bad plaster."

"What is the reason?"

"Haste and the desire to make money. Plaster is at the lowest point of degradation in this country. The lime used in Italian fresco after it has been slaked is kept in pits a year before it is mixed with sand. It is the utmost you can do here to have it kept two weeks. If I wanted to begin a buon fresco painting tomorrow I'd have to wait a year for the proper lime. Naturally, the first thing I must guard against is cracks."

"Is that the only obstacle?"

"No. Construction is against it. Plaster for buon fresco should be placed directly on the solid wall. We don't build that way. We build pine boxes inside of our houses. The walls are all furred. Now lathes tear the plaster and cracks soon develop. There is a wire lathing that might be used. But it costs more, is not very suitable for buon fresco, and, as I have said, the desire to make money results in obstacles to success too formidable for the artist to overcome. The difficulty of getting workmen I have alluded to. The only buon fresco in this country is in the Capitol at Washington. Poor old Brumidi, who did it, if not a good artist, was a first-class frescoer. Distemper—color mixed with glue—is the miserable substitute offered nowadays for true fresco. By the way, here are two examples which will illustrate the two processes."

Mr. Crowninshield produced a small oblong panel with a cherub painted on it.

"Here," he said, "is an example of real buon fresco, which I made for some students. The wall of this room is that distemper which passes here for fresco. If you will observe, I can scale off with my fingers the color from the wall. The glue quickly dries and detaches from the plaster. But you cannot destroy the surface of this panel except by removing the plaster. I can wash it. See! The secret of this is that when the color is applied to the wet plaster a chemical film is formed which protects the color like a fine glaze. If the plaster dries before the color is applied the color cannot penetrate the film, and the work is lost. We are so much in the habit of painting in oils that we have never acquired the beautiful facility of the Italians, which would be necessary in covering large spaces of wet plaster."

"Then you must have a suggestion in reserve, since you have faith in the revival of mural painting?"

"Art is never dependent on its tools. The best thing I know—that is, that will meet the demands of the moment—is wax paint. As I have said, painting in oils is easier for us in every way. Now, wax paints are oil colors mixed with wax and turpentine. I have them mixed as you see, according to a formula of my own, in tubes like oil colors."

"Wherein lies the advantage of wax?"

"It is remarkable for its resistance to acids, and the air is full of them. Oil paintings grow black, wax paintings do not. Wax defies gases, especially sulphuretted hydrogen. It resists the action of moisture. For example, I did a church not long ago. There was a decoration in the ceiling, which for some reason was done only partly in wax paints. The roof sprung a leak. When I was called in to see the damage, the wax painting was unhurt, the rest was destroyed. Another reason is, it dries quickly and allows a painter to finish his work almost at one sitting. In color it has both the richness of oil and the delicacy of fresco. You can apply it opaque, semi-transparent, or transparent, as in water-color. But the greatest of all reasons is it has a dead finish. It does not shine, otherwise you would never be able to see your painting."

"Granted wax paint as the medium, what direction would design take in this modern revival?"

"There is absolutely no new thing. Novelty consists not in the subject but in the manner of seeing. The Madonna—Love—these, for example, are subjects for

ception of the monumental and decorative qualities of mural paintings is Puvis de Chavannes. He is also individual. He sees in his own way. His work, too, is light in color. All decoration in public buildings should be light. In the Pantheon Puvis de Chavannes's scenes from the life of Saint Genevieve float like a bloom over the wall. He understands his medium. He works in oil mixed with turpentine. How much finer would the Pantheon be if the entire decoration had been given to him, although I suppose it is proper enough to make of the Pantheon a stadium for the exhibition of the works of the great contemporary painters of France. But it is a very difficult thing for easel painters to do monumental work. They have neither the sympathies nor the training. When Baudry was commissioned to decorate the Grand Opera House at Paris, he gave eight or nine years to preparatory study before he began to paint. A man ought to do so. Then he ought to take off his coat, put on overalls and mount the scaffold. The French painters have introduced the very bad habit of painting decorative works in the studio. They do this because they want to exhibit.

But the conditions are too complex. No man can foresee them. I am a firm believer in working on the wall."

"Conceding the desirability of mural painting and men trained for that purpose, what are the chances of its introduction?"

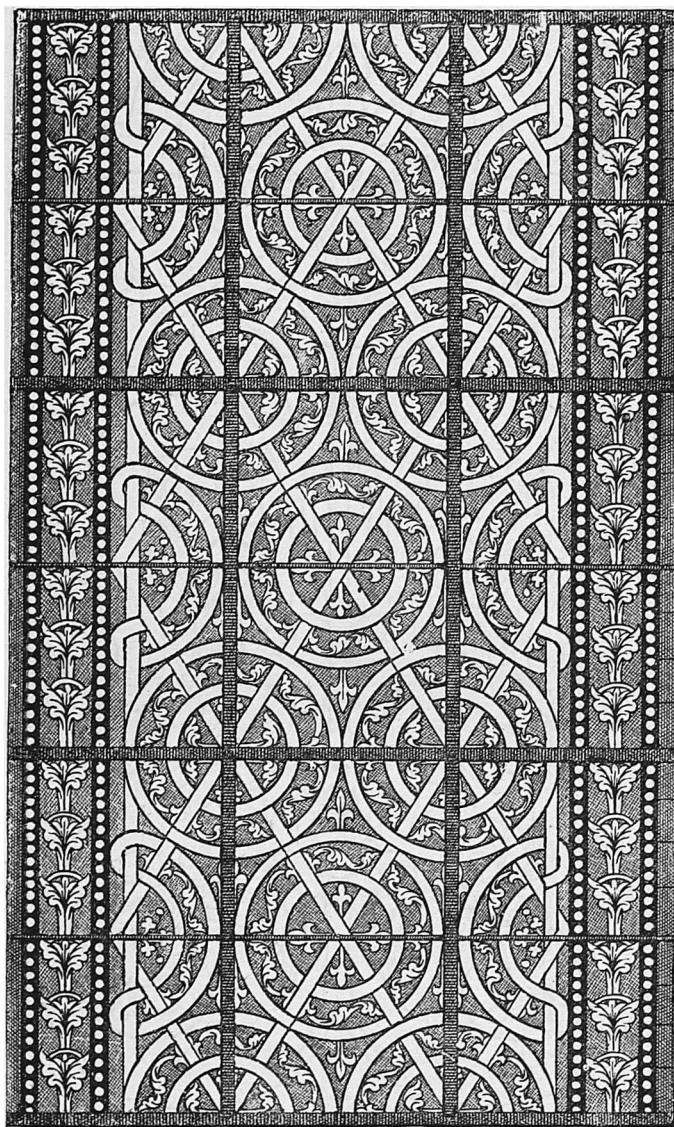
"The architects have the destiny of mural painting in their hands. They can't absolutely control it, but they can counsel and advise. Only see what Richardson was able to do for art in glass and mural decoration. It is true that architects are paying more attention to the artistic side of architecture than formerly. The Architectural League is for the purpose of cementing the allied arts of painting, sculpture and architecture."

"The methods of competition render the artist helpless when standing alone. The Government is the worst of clients, for to reach it the candidate must descend into the mire of politics. A church committee's methods are equally reprehensible—I almost said immoral. If by chance it approaches an artist, he is asked to send in sketches for a competition, without remuneration. If he should forget himself so far as to do this, Raphael himself, who might hastily pencil down for them a few suggestive, pregnant lines, would stand no chance against some worn-out church decorators who would furnish them a neatly colored sketch on shining card-board. It is not a question of spending money, but of the injudicious use of money."

"Then it is the architects who are to lead decoration out of the land of bondage?"

"Yes, the architects. All that we artists get is through them. Why, if we only get one thing out of a thousand it is a beginning. Never has there been such a moment in this country as the present. It is art's great opportunity. Public buildings, national, State and civic, are springing up everywhere. Churches, railway stations, great commercial exchanges, are in their train. There is nothing artificial in this building activity. That decoration will be required is certain. The employment of artists, whether for mural painting or for work in mosaics—why not? it is only another form of mural painting—would

be the means of developing art in that glorious way that has characterized similar epochs in the past. Opportunity would create the men. I have faith."



FRENCH-PAINTED WINDOW OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

FROM THE CHURCH OF ST. JEAN AUX BOIS, NEAR COMPIÈGNE.

every age. The beauty of the nude figure may appropriately occupy the French as well as the Greeks. It would be a mistake to imitate Raphael and Michael Angelo. They are rich in hints for the modern artist, but we must get in our painting what belongs to our modern atmosphere."

"Can a man escape from it?"

"No. Suppose an artist undertakes to paint a Parnassus. He would paint the landscape, for example, in a way impossible to the ancients. It is in the air to do it. We are fonder of nature than they were. We are more subtle in color, not richer colorists. Do what we will we'd get the age in."

"Baudry's goddesses are pregnant French types?"

"Baudry was Parisian to the tips of his fingers. But whatever we paint it has to be stately and dignified. It must have monumental qualities. Raphael had these to a consummate degree. Here is a more recent example in this frieze of Flandrin in the church of St. Vincent de Paul at Paris. Observe the noble disposition of the lines. The one man among the moderns who has the true con-

Of all worthless things, Dutch marquetry goods which have not been properly steamed and seasoned here are perhaps the most worthless. No imported furniture, even the best, will last long in our trying climate; but Dutch veneered and inlaid chairs and tables, such as were sold at New York auctions last spring, warp and fall apart in a very little while. The "old Delft" and "Canton" one finds with importations of the kind, with their forged marks and artfully concealed repairs, will not deceive the connoisseur, and among the "old Dutch silver," which invariably completes the invoice, the wise collector does not look for bargains nor hardly for genuine pieces.

WITH yellow or buff walls, dado and woodwork of chocolate or olive brown, or dark blue toned down with black, are effective.